COMPARATIVE RELIGION COURSES

WINTER QUARTER 2013

JSIS B 202 Introduction to World Religions: Eastern Traditions Tokuno TTh 1:30-3:20

JSIS B 254 American Religion Wellman TTh 1:30-3:20
Seeks to understand religious diversity in the American context and the varieties of religions in the American historical horizon including religious minorities, American Protestants, public religious expressions, and new American religions.

JSIS B 307 Religion and World Politics Gill TTh 10:30-11:50
This course explores the intersection of religion and politics in various regions of the world, including the U.S., Europe, Middle East, Latin America, and other regions. Presents a historical perspective on religion alongside contemporary issues in religion, politics, and church-state relations. Given the short, 10-week quarter system, we will not be able to cover every religious tradition. Instead of doing a superficial survey of religion and politics in each region of the world, we will focus most of our attention developing a theoretical framework based on the Christian world, then turning our attention to Islam in the last 2-3 weeks.

JSIS B 407 Political Islam and Contemporary Islamist Movements Robinson TTh 1:30-2:20
This seminar will examine 3 Islamist movements (movements to reform Muslim society through the capture of the modern state and the establishment of Islamic practices, especially Islamic law). The goal is to understand how Islamist movements have shaped the both regional politics and the emergence of global political Islam. The course will start by reading briefly on the history of modernist Islam and the rise of Islamist theory and political parties. Then the course will look at 3 parties in their regional Islamic context (Pakistan, Palestine, Indonesia). The final part of the course will focus on student’s own research.

JSIS B 472 Topics in Early Christianity: The Legacy of Paul Tite WF 1:30-3:20
One of the most significant figures in first century Christianity was Paul of Tarsus. Indeed, some have gone so far as to claim him as the founder of Christianity. Paul’s dynamic and challenging sense of mission resulted in his extensive founding of Christian communities. Within the social network of these communities, he entered heated debates with competing Christian leaders/groups regarding the social and theological identity of Christianity. Paul’s most obvious impact, however, is his significant literary output. Indeed, most of the New Testament is comprised of his letters, or letters written in his name. This course offers an introduction to Paul, his letters and his legacy. Our exploration will focus on three aspects of Paul and his legacy:
reconstructing the historical Paul (who was he, when did he live, how was he portrayed in Acts?); exploring Paul and his communities through his letters (as primary sources, this will be the focus of the course); and how Paul was used by other early Christian writers (e.g., letters written in his name, narrative and apocalyptic use of Paul as an authoritative figure into the second century, etc). Our focus in this course will be upon reading the primary texts in English translation, using assigned secondary readings (supplemented by lectures) as a background for reading these texts. A mixture of lecture and discussion will frame this course.

JSIS B 526 Political Islam and Islamic Fundamentalism Robinson M 1:30-4:20
Focusing on recent analysis of Muslim civil society and the Islamic public sphere, this course examines political Islam as a phenomenon produced at the intersection of universalistic and particularistic political cultures and in the spaces between political, religious, and social authority. The aims of this course are to introduce students to the complexities of issues surrounding Islamic political movements in contemporary Muslim societies and to learn to examine Islamic political movements through critical analyses that take into account historical, social, and cultural perspectives; to assist students in engaging in reflective knowledge production, examining discipline-specific suppositions of method and analysis as well as the overt contents of the sources; and to assist students in placing their reading and research within the intellectual genealogies of established scholarship.

JSIS 481/MUSIC 445 Performance, Power, and Identity in Africa Ellingson 3-5 cr.
F 1:30-3:50 http://faculty.washington.edu/ellingsn/Africa_Perf.html
Chiefs and kings dance, sitting in palanquins carried on the shoulders of their subjects through the streets of the city, as traffic stops in recognition of the periodic reinvestment of power in human subjects. Ordinary people dance, in processions where they show respect or stage comic lampoons of power, at nightclubs, and at funerals where they may celebrate the life of a complete stranger or the father they knew but were not related to, find a partner in business or love, see a fish-shaped coffin or a sheep draped in an American flag. Traditional priests dance, as their drummers call down the gods who will possess them and behave in unexpected, spectacular ways; and Christian churchgoers dance down the aisle to the altar, perhaps to the same drums as the traditional priests. And each performance includes many visible and hidden layers of meaning, from the funeral to the notorious "Drum Wars" which recently raised fears of religious conflict, but which have deep roots not only in ideological differences, but also in the political economy of modern nation-building.

Africa is the postmodern world in its most vivid manifestation, caught up in the great twenty-first century confrontations of globalization and the local, of religion and secularism, of tradition and change, of individualism and community. And above all, Africans see all around them many different vectors of constraint and opportunity, that seem to point chaotically in every opposing direction towards every imaginable future, in societies where people grasp for freedom to make crucial choices for themselves, even as they feel pushed and pulled in many directions at once by forces they have little control over. And so, encouraged by their culture, Africans dramatize their conflicts and their choices in performances that both mirror and reflect back upon the political, economic and spiritual powers that shape and empower their lives, through which they forge and declare their identities. This class will explore some of these performances and their place in the lives of the people who create them.
JSIS 490 A Special Topics: American Megachurches Wellman M 1:30-4:20

American Megachurches (2,000 or more attendees on a Sunday) have exploded in growth since 1970; something in the neighborhood of 40 percent of American churchgoers attend these kinds of churches today. In a real sense, if we don’t understand American megachurches we don’t understand American Christianity—perhaps not even American religion. In fact, many UW students have grown up in these churches; Rick Warren’s Saddleback Church in Orange County, Ca.; Joel Osteen’s Lakewood Church in Houston, TX, and Mark Driscoll’s Mars Hill Church in Seattle, are just a few of the literally hundreds of megachurches in the U.S. and around the world. This will be your chance to understand, visit one or two, and understand how and why they are so popular in American culture.

The typical critique of these churches is that they are consumer-driven manipulators of the public; they support a conservative political agenda and are more than often driven by a form of prosperity gospel. We will seek in this course to go beyond these kinds of superficial evaluations to analyze these congregations as religious organizations and to understand the behaviors, habits and beliefs within the American context and culture. Like all religious phenomenon, these churches borrow from their surrounding culture, but they also impact that culture: theologically, morally and politically. Our task is to understand these organizations and their relation to the culture from a sociological, psychological and moral/religious perspective.

JSIS 490/590 B Women in Buddhism: Seminar in Buddhist Studies Tokuno
MW 3:30-5:20

The course will explore issues of gender and sexuality in Buddhism based on readings of canonical texts, biographical narratives, ethnographical reports, and modern scholarships. Discussion topics will include: question of methodology and feminist perspectives; religious institution and patriarchy; gendered symbols and their interpretations; doctrinal egalitarianism and androcentric practice. Students will learn about a wide spectrum of roles of and attitudes toward women and the feminine reflected in Buddhist doctrine, practice, and experience both in pre-modern and modern/contemporary contexts, and how they are informed by a complex of factors, including social-institutional norms and soteriological ideals of Buddhism. We will begin with consideration of methodology and feminism, followed by discussion of India, Tibet, Southeast Asia (Thailand), and East Asia (China, Korea, Japan). The penultimate session will cover women’s participation and leadership in new religious movements in India, Taiwan, and Japan.

JSIS 590 Heterodox Cosmologies and Social Behavior Williams Th 3:30-6:20

What relationships exist between myths about the origins and nature of the cosmos and social behavior or lifestyle? This seminar will focus on this question with particular regard to cosmological myths that are often considered more “dualistic,” or that imagine the cosmos to be the product of, and under the control or influence of, forces other than the highest “god” or most sublime level of reality. Examples that will likely be treated include Platonic/Middle Platonic/Neopythagorean philosophical traditions; select instances of heterodox early Christian speculation (e.g., texts from the Nag Hammadi Coptic library; the North African writer Arnobius of Sicca); Hermetic literature (e.g., the Poimandres); Manichaean, Mandaean and Islamic mystical texts; and medieval Christian heterodox traditions such as the Cathars.
Fascination with most of these traditions stems from their association with esoteric or “heretical” teachings. They have evoked a very large bibliography of research, with the majority devoted to philologically oriented studies on recovered sources (editions, translations); description and comparison of deviant mythologies; theories about their origins and interconnections; and reconstructing the history of the theological conflicts surrounding them. There has also been significant interest in the impact of these traditions on social and political history, again primarily in terms of the historical significance and consequences of socio-political conflicts between “orthodox” and “heretical” factions.